

The Bantu Laws Amendment Bill Brains Trust

A BRAINS TRUST arranged by the Cape Western Region of the Black Sash on the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill, and held in the Cape Town City Hall on the 14th May, drew an audience of about 800 people.

The Question Master was Mr. Gordon Bagnall, and the team consisted of Mr. G. F. Froneman, Nationalist M.P. for Heilbron, Mr. Ralph Horwitz, a Cape Town economist, Mr. Donald Molteno, Q.C., Mrs. E. Stott of the Black Sash, Mr. F. S. Steyn, Nationalist M.P. for Kempton Park, and Mrs. Helen Suzman, Progressive M.P. for Houghton.

Mr. Froneman said that the purpose of the Bill would not be properly understood unless the whole policy of the Government was taken into consideration. It aimed at establishing more firmly the migratory labour system. It was the only reasonable policy to release tensions.

Mr. Molteno said that he disagreed with Mr. Froneman that the Bill would release tensions. It aimed at the establishment of large labour camps in the Reserves. It would create still larger concentrations of men without women. Experience had shown that where there were large numbers of men, such as soldiers, who were bereft of stabilizing factors such as family life, they tended to become violent. He did not think that racial tensions would be reduced by artificially separating large numbers of men from their families.

Mrs. Suzman said the migratory labour system was not a good one. It broke up family life, and was not good for agriculture or industry as it led to inefficiency. The Africans did not get an opportunity to be properly trained.

Mr. Steyn said that the Bill was a modification of 12 laws affecting the Bantu, and was the complement of the Transkei Bill under which Bantu homelands were developed. "We are determined that the rest of South Africa should be a White homeland", he said.

Mrs. Stott said that the Bill aimed at increasing migratory labour, the acceptance of which in the past was a blot on the Statute Book. Only those who were in touch with the Africans understood how very hard it was to be a woman with a migratory husband.

Every aspect of African life was harassed by the existing laws; she asked how the new Bill could possibly reduce the tension.

THE LADIES OF THE TEAM



Left: Courageous Mrs. Helen Suzman, who maintained a lonely but spirited stand in Parliament against the "No-Trial Bill". Right: Mrs. Eulalie Stott, a former National President of the Black Sash.

Mr. Horwitz said that the Bill codified existing laws. It was "an incredible code and a horrible code", he said. Nowhere outside Russia was there a code of labour comparable to that proposed in the Bill. The policy behind it was the forced planning of industry according to the Communistic technique of labour control.

"The Bill is on all fours with Communist labour control. It will deprive the labourer of all freedom of choice as to where he may work, when he can change his job, which is the right which every labourer in the world outside Russia has. The Bill reaches into the being of millions of people."

He said that Russian workers were forced to leave the areas when they lost their jobs. In 1939 all Soviet workers had to have labour books that had a remarkable similarity to the technique of labour control for the Bantu worker.

By the control of labour, the wage bill of the African worker would not rise. The Minister had said that no White capital would be allowed in the Transkei. Progress in the Transkei without White capital would be impossible.

Mr. Horwitz said that it was his view that in the long run racial tensions would be heightened to a degree that would make them uncontrollable.

Replying to Mr. Horwitz, Mr. Froneman said that had he known that the discussion would be given a "communistic" trend, he would not have taken part. Mr. Horwitz had made a number of misstatements. He challenged him to show that the African did not have freedom of choice of labour. The Minister had not said that no White capital would be used in the Transkei — he had said "no private White capital".

Mr. Horwitz said that he did not doubt the sincerity of men like Mr. Froneman. The day would come when they too would be horrified by this type of legislation.

He asked whether it was not a fact that a definition of Communism was State capital. State capital in reserves was being contemplated, and the very essence of the argument against Communism was that private capital was excluded.

Mr. Froneman said that private enterprise and capital were not excluded in the Transkei. The Bantu could have as many enterprises there as they wished — it was only private enterprise as far as Whites were concerned that was excluded.

Mrs. Suzman observed that to become unemployed would make an African guilty of a crime.

In reply to a question, Mr. Molteno agreed that an African who went on leave to the Reserves would lose his right to return to his employer. Of this, Mrs. Stott said: "The effect is going to be to deter Africans from making periodic visits home, and will be disastrous on the women and children at home and on general stability."

If an African knew that he could no longer go home with the certainty of returning to his employment, he would be put off going home. "This can only make marriage for Africans a farce." (Loud hear-hears from the audience.) This was serious and tragic, continued Mrs. Stott, together with the provision limiting the right of African women to visit their menfolk in an urban area.

Mr. Froneman said that if an African left his work for a year and his place was taken by another African, he could not expect of right to get the job back, for there would be two men available for the job, which made nonsense of control.

Mr. Horwitz asked, "Is an African just a labour unit? It is completely unreal to suggest that one African worker is just like another; they differ like any other workers the world over in productivity, in capacity to do jobs".

The unique difficulty for industrialists in South Africa was that they had to deal with a labour force which the Government regarded as "interchangeable units". "Most South African employers regard their workers as human beings", he said. (Applause) Under the Bill an African would have no effective choice in finding a job again. Such a choice was not only a legal right, but a human right.

Mr. Steyn said that in South Africa industry had made no complaints against the labour bureau system. An African woman would be allowed to visit her husband for 72 hours, and she could remain longer if she obtained permission.

Mrs. Suzman said that an ordinary African would not get very far if he went and complained to a labour bureau. It was disgusting, she said, that any of these so-called "concessions" should ever be considered necessary in a Christian country, that it should be a "concession" for a wife to live with her husband. (Applause)

Mr. Froneman said that in the Nationalist view there were two communities, Africans and Whites. (Laughter) "In the Bantu area, the White man has no rights, he only has concessions, and the Bantu only has concessions in the White area. That is our view! Because we have diametrically opposed

(Continued Overleaf)

Situation at a glance



(Rand Daily Mail)

BRAIN TRUST (Continued)

views we cannot meet one another. This talk of 'miserable concession' — well, it might be so in Mrs. Suzman's view, but our view is different".

He said that many migrant workers were employed in different parts of Europe. (Cries of: "Of their own choice!") These workers were away from their homes, as were the migratory African workers, so it was not as un-Christian as Mrs. Suzman would have people think.

On the limiting of living-in servants to one, Mrs. Stott said there was nothing wrong with doing one's own housework, but it was wrong in a society where employment was scarce to prevent people from continuing in employment.

Mr. Froneman said if people wanted more than one servant, they should apply to the Bantu labour bureau, which would see if accommodation was available, and if it was not available people could seek permission to have a second living-in servant.

Why could the African servants not be allowed to live with their own people, instead of in a back-

yard? People wanted the convenience of having them, but denied them the convenience and comfort of being with their own people.

Mrs. Suzman said that if the idea was to encourage Africans to lead a normal, married life, this would be a point; but that was not the aim of the Bill. The object was to limit family life among Africans in the urban areas — "So Mr. Froneman cannot get away with it that easily!" (Mr. Froneman laughed, and there was applause.)

Mrs. Suzman said that Africans had to get up in the small hours to get to work on time, but when there was an additional load on the transport from the townships to the cities the position would be worse.

"Why should whole lives of people be controlled in this way?" she asked. "The Government puts its busy little finger in every aspect of life." (Applause.)

(With acknowledgements to the "Cape Times".)

The Bantu Laws Amendment Bill

Preamble to Black Sash Memorandum to the Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development.

THE BLACK SASH feels sure that the Government of the Republic of South Africa, like that of any other forward-looking country, strives to establish a contented and educated population with a stake in its country's future; trained in skills and having an earning capacity which advances the general economy.

The basis of such a population is deeply rooted in family life in which morality and respect for parental and governmental authority thrive.

To give of their best, people must have a sense of basic security and a hope of advancement.

We consider that the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill, 1963, puts the clock back on the Twentieth Century way of life, known and cherished in all democratic countries. This way of life has been painfully evolved after hundreds of years of struggle for the freedom of the individual and his right to live, work, marry and rear his children in the light of modern conditions and moral principles.

This Bill, by denying these rights to millions of Africans, can cause the moral collapse of the Black man as he loses his security, his employment, his hope of advancement, his home — in many cases the only one he has ever known — and even his wife and family. He will lose the

benefits of contact with White civilization, education and culture; a loss which can condemn the Africans to the state of a backward people and undo the work of many previous generations. We fear that this loss of security and contact, this moral collapse, must leave the Black man a prey to frustration, to bitter discontent and to insidious propaganda.

Untold millions of rands have been spent both by the Government and other bodies on African townships, on housing, schools, clinics, hospitals, libraries, sporting facilities, etc. The urban African has become accustomed to these amenities and, if he is to be "endorsed out" to impoverished and unimproved places, surely this cannot be done before all the facilities are duplicated in the Scheduled and Released Areas.

As we see it, the interpretation and implementation of this Bill by authorized officers and, in particular, of certain clauses, will have all the aforementioned disastrous effects.